

Report of the 2003
College and
University College
ESL Student
Outcomes Survey

English as a Second Language
Student Outcomes Project



Ministry of Advanced Education

Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and
Women's Services

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Report of the 2003 College and University College ESL Student Outcomes Survey

The *Report of the 2003 ESL Student Outcomes Survey* presents a snapshot of a group of 4,022 learners who accessed one or more publicly funded English as a second language (ESL) courses at a British Columbia college or university college over a two-year period between July 1, 2000, and June 30, 2002. The document reports responses to more than 30 questions in areas such as demographics, the learners' perceptions of the quality and success of their experiences in their courses, and employment and further education outcomes.

Survey Highlights

- More than 90 per cent of respondents reported that their ESL courses in the public post-secondary system helped them reach their most important goal.
- Between 80 per cent and 90 per cent of respondents:
 - were mainly or completely satisfied with their courses.
 - rated their classroom instruction as good or very good.
 - found their ESL classes helpful in improving their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.
- Ninety per cent said their ESL classes helped them adjust to life in Canada.
- More than 67 per cent say they came to Canada with some post-secondary education.
- Forty-five per cent report having undergraduate or post-graduate university degrees.
- Nearly 75 per cent of the former ESL students are in the labour force. However, only 78 per cent of that number are employed. Twenty-two per cent are unemployed and looking for work.

Introduction

In British Columbia's public post-secondary education system, English as a second language is part of a larger cluster of programs commonly called developmental or access programs. Adult basic education (ABE), including literacy, and adult special education (ASE) are the other two program areas in this grouping.

Access to developmental programs has been identified as a priority by the Ministry of Advanced Education. ABE, ESL and ASE courses are essential to many adult learners who seek to upgrade their literacy, language and academic skills to meet goals of education, employment and social adaptation. B.C.'s public post-secondary institutions must meet annual performance measures and targets set by the ministry for these program areas.

Under the 1998 *Agreement for Canada-British Columbia Co-operation on Immigration*, the federal government transfers funds to British Columbia to administer the delivery of settlement and adaptation services and ESL. Both AVED and the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services administer these funds to support ESL delivered by public institutions. (MCAWS also funds ESL programs delivered by some school districts, private, non-profit and community agencies. Learners from these programs were not included in this survey.)

ESL Program Delivery in the Public Post-Secondary System

Sixteen public post-secondary institutions in B.C. deliver ESL and participated in this survey: Camosun College, Capilano College, College of New Caledonia, College of the Rockies, Douglas College, Kwantlen University College, Malaspina University-College, North Island College, Northern Lights College, Northwest Community College, Okanagan University College, Open Learning Agency, Selkirk College, University College of the Cariboo, University College of the Fraser Valley and Vancouver Community College.

All of these institutions receive funding from AVED—seven from MCAWS—to provide a broad range of ESL courses and programs to B.C. residents whose first language is not English. Most of these programs have been correlated to the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB), which are "a descriptive scale of communicative proficiency in English as a Second Language (ESL) expressed as 12 benchmarks or reference points."¹ These benchmarks are used by ESL providers across the country to describe and measure a learner's ability in the four skills areas (speaking, listening, reading and writing) in English and thus to facilitate transfer from program to program, province to province. The CLB consist of three stages: basic proficiency (CLB 1-4), intermediate proficiency (CLB 5-8) and advanced proficiency (CLB 9-12).

¹ Grazyna Pawlikowska-Smith. *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000*. Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, Ottawa, 2000.

AVED-funded programs at B.C.'s colleges and university colleges:

English for access courses (CLB 1-8) provide students with the language and socio-cultural skills to participate in and contribute to Canadian society. They may include basic literacy, integrated and specific language skills, survival skills courses, and community-based ESL for special groups.

English for academic purposes courses (CLB 6-10) focus on language skills, as well as study skills, critical thinking, problem solving and co-operative group work. They prepare students for academic, technology, career and vocational programs, as well as society and the workforce.

English for work courses help second language speakers find and keep jobs, and go on to take further training and studies. They include preparatory skills, vocational English for specific purposes (ESP), adjunct ESL and job search ESL programs.

MCAWS provides funds to seven public post-secondary institutions for the delivery of the **English language services for adults (ELSA)** programs. These courses, at CLB levels 1-4, are intended to help newcomers settle and adapt to Canada. They are free to eligible new immigrants and refugees for a limited time, to a level of competency roughly equivalent to the completion of CLB Level 4.

Survey Objectives

Each year thousands of people across British Columbia whose first language is not English enrol in ESL courses and programs in public post-secondary institutions to improve their proficiency in the language. These listening, speaking, reading and writing skills are particularly important to immigrants and refugees and are seen as the key to successful adaptation to the community, opportunities for further education and participation in the workforce. The goal of English as a second language programs is to open these doors – doors that allow individuals to make a strong contribution to the B.C. economy and society.

Public post-secondary institutions in B.C. provide ESL courses and programs based on the highest curriculum and teaching standards. The stakeholders who fund and deliver these programs need the means to measure the scope and quality of the services offered to people who seek to improve their English language skills.

Survey responses will be used by AVED and MCAWS to support decision-making and program evaluation, and to inform the development of accountability frameworks. The data will also enhance understanding of the education and labour markets. Colleges and university colleges will receive valuable

demographic information, as well as feedback from former ESL students to use as a basis for evaluating and improving programs and services.

The snapshot taken by the 2003 ESL Outcomes Survey shows a group of learners who took one or more publicly funded ESL or ELSA programs at a B.C. college or university college between July 1, 2000, and June 30, 2002. At the time of contact, the respondents would have been out of formal ESL training at a particular institution between 10 and 24 months.

The survey provides information on:

1. The demographics of former ESL students.
2. Students' assessment of the quality of their ESL education experience in the B.C. public post-secondary system.
3. Employment and further education outcomes of former ESL students.
4. Students' assessment of how their ESL experience contributed to their social and economic participation in B.C.

Survey Development

Measuring the outcomes of ESL students is not a straightforward task. ESL courses are likely to be only the first step along a pathway to meaningful employment and further education. The programs do not lead to immediate "graduation" outcomes. Students often have goals that have little to do with further education or employment, but are tied to things like social integration, helping their children with their homework, or simply being able to use English in their daily lives.

Sometimes, the path to achieving any of the goals commonly reported by ESL students may be quite long. Learning a language is a complex, gradual process. Some studies have suggested it takes students five to seven years to approach native speaker proficiency,² although these data are old and may no longer be relevant when Canada is receiving more highly educated newcomers. Some recent research with adult learners in Calgary suggests a correlation between their level of education and rate of progress in ESL classes.³

A working group composed of program delivery and institutional research staff from several colleges and university colleges, representatives from both

² Cummins, J. "Age on arrival and immigrant second language learning in Canada." *Applied Linguistics*, 2, 1981, 132-149.

³ Watt, D. and Lake, D. "Benchmarking Adult Rates of Second Language Acquisition & Integration: How long and how fast?" Available on the website of the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks: www.language.ca under "What's New."

ministries and the Centre for Education Information Standards and Services (CEISS) first met in December of 2002 to begin plans for this project.

Members of the working group agreed that they wanted information in several key areas:

- demographics
- previous education/employment
- level of English
- learner goals
- learner satisfaction with courses/programs
- employment/education outcomes
- social adaptation

The survey questionnaire was finalized in the spring of 2003 and, following a request for proposal process, R. A. Malatest and Associates were retained to carry out the telephone interviews, response data entry and coding for the National Occupational Classification. The interviews were conducted in June and early July of 2003. Response data validation, coding and creation of derived variables were undertaken by CEISS.

Survey Limitations

It is hoped that this ESL Student Outcomes Survey will act as a template, providing clear, statistically valid information to serve as a baseline for comparison with data gathered in the future. Nevertheless, limited funds necessitated compromises. In some instances, potentially valuable avenues of inquiry were sacrificed in the interest of higher completion rates.

Surveys of people whose first language is not English often take longer and cost more to administer because some respondents may have difficulty with aural comprehension and/or speaking on the telephone. In this case, 3,445 people completed the survey in English, and 567 required the help of multi-lingual survey staff members using languages other than English.

The average interview times in the survey field test were 2.6 minutes (or 18 per cent) longer than the duration specified in the contract with the survey company. Rather than reduce the number of surveys delivered, several questions were eliminated from the original document. These were:

- What type of job did you have before leaving your country?
- Why did you stop taking ESL courses at (institution name)?
- What courses are you currently taking?
- How many jobs do you currently have?
- How much volunteer work do you do in an English-speaking environment?

These questions were deemed important by many, if not all, of the members of the working group. The decision to eliminate the first question listed above was particularly difficult because all stakeholders are interested in exploring the issue of immigrant "underemployment, i.e. having to accept employment well below previous education, work experience and skill levels. However, since the question about previous jobs also takes a long time to answer and response tabulation is time consuming, it was decided that the questions about previous education and current employment should take precedence.

The ESL Student Outcomes Survey has gathered informative data that improves our understanding of the experiences of those who use the public post-secondary system to learn English—particularly immigrants and refugees. The ESL population is unique, and stakeholders want a broad spectrum of information, ranging from previous education levels to social integration, data that are not targeted by the annual B.C. College and Institute Student Outcomes surveys.

The last ESL student outcomes project in B.C., published in 1998⁴, consisted of three phases and included both qualitative and quantitative data gathered using various methods over many months. The questionnaire and data collected in this current survey generally do not allow direct comparison with the information assembled between 1997 and 1998. The sample size in the two earlier surveys was considerably smaller—2,330 students for the initial in-class questionnaire—and the survey questions in the quantitative section were, in some cases, not similar enough for comparison purposes.

However, there are areas that can be compared with some level of confidence, especially demographics and reported level of previous education. Employment outcomes may also be compared, at least informally, with the *2002 B.C. College and Institute Student Outcomes*.

Survey Methodology

The cohort selection criteria given to institutions included students who:

- were enrolled in at least one ESL course at some point between July 1, 2000 and June 30, 2002;
- completed at least one ESL course during the enrollment period;
- were not enrolled in an ESL course at the institution between July 2, 2002, and the date of the cohort extraction.

⁴ British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology. *Outcomes of B.C. College and Institute ESL Students: English as a Second Language Student Outcomes Project*. 1998.

International students, who are studying in Canada on a temporary visa, were excluded from the cohort definition.

The validated cohort file included cases from all 16 public post-secondary colleges and university colleges in B.C. and amounted to 10,000 eligible cases. Seven institutions reported ELSA-funded students.

Since the budget for the survey allowed for only 4,000 completions, there was a need to reduce the number of cases submitted to the data collection company to achieve the desired response rate of about 45 per cent. To accomplish this with the least amount of impact on the ability to report by institution and funding source, a stratified random sample was taken of AVED-funded cases from Vancouver Community College (VCC).

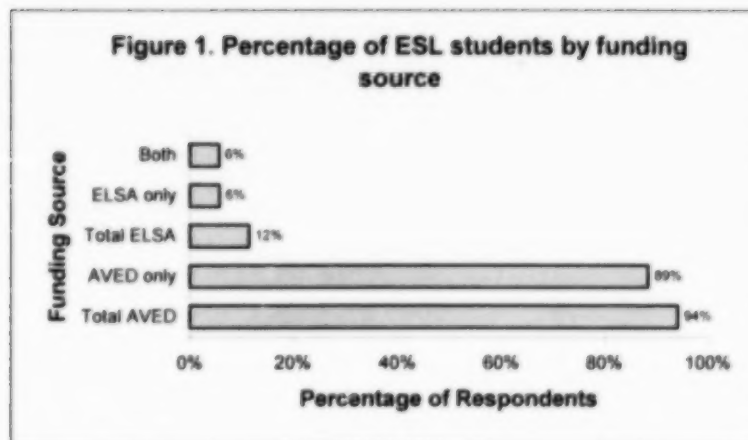
At the time of the cohort extraction, VCC delivered the greatest number of ESL courses and programs in the province, accounting for about 67 per cent of the student full-time equivalents (FTEs) reported by public post-secondary colleges and university colleges. There were 7,081 eligible cases from VCC in the survey cohort, amounting to 70 per cent of the cohort. The sample was stratified by ESL program and ESL level. Thus, the total number of AVED-funded VCC cases submitted to the data collection company dropped by 1,114 – from 7,081 to 5,967. While the former VCC students represented 70 per cent of the initial cohort, the removal of 1,114 names resulted in VCC respondents constituting only 64 per cent of the responses. The project working group agreed that, for the purposes of this report, this stratification was not sufficiently significant to warrant re-weighting the data.

Response Rates

Out of a total cohort of 8,972 cases, 4,022 surveys were completed. This amounts to a response rate of 45 per cent, which is better than that anticipated by the various stakeholders who have worked in the field for years. It also provides a much larger sample than the last two ESL surveys.⁵

Respondents who took AVED-funded courses:	3,558
Respondents who took ELSA-funded courses:	235
Respondents who took both AVED and ELSA-funded courses:	229
 Total completions:	 4,022

⁵ The 1997 questionnaire had 2,330 respondents. The 1998 telephone survey had 1,221 respondents.



As expected, response rates for the ELSA-funded sample were lower, at 37 per cent, compared with 46 per cent for AVED-funded students. Immigrants eligible for ELSA funding tend to be more recent arrivals, and newcomers likely have a higher mobility rate than the overall population. This makes telephone contact after a period of time more difficult, which is borne out by the number of not-in-service numbers identified by the surveyor: 35 per cent of the ELSA sample and 28 per cent of the AVED group.

Response rates by institution were fairly consistent. Since this is considered to be a "system" survey, data are not broken down by institution. Colleges and university colleges have received their individual data to use for their own purposes. A table illustrating responses by institution may be found in Appendix A.

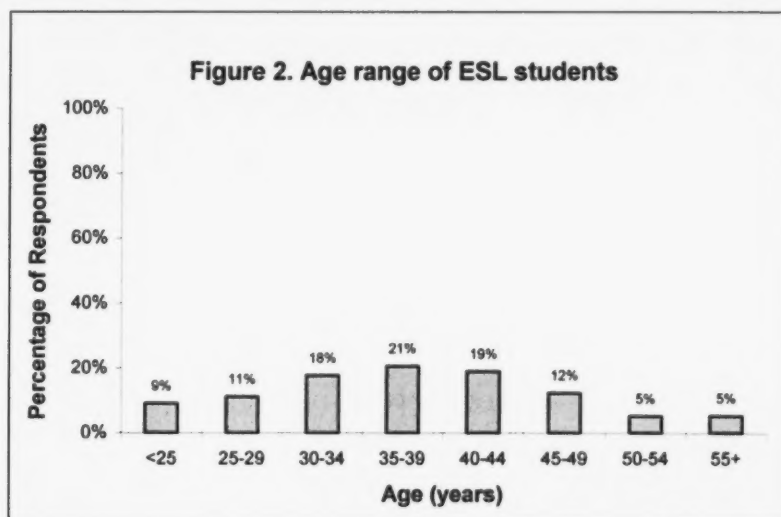
It must also be noted that because "don't know" was one of the response options in the survey questions, these responses were included in the denominator of the response rate calculation. "Don't know" was felt to be a legitimate response to some of the questions, for example: "Before you started your English classes, what was your skill level in English reading?" Also, some respondents may know the answer but be unable to choose a response option due to language barriers.

Survey Findings

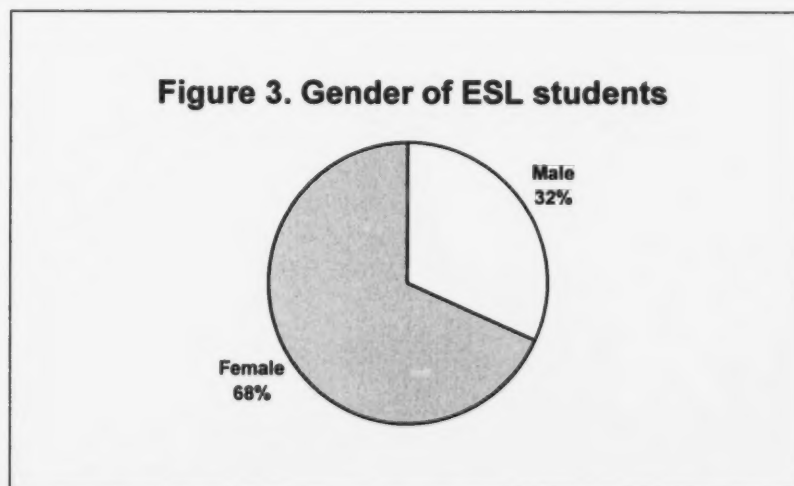
Who are the respondents?

Age and Gender:

Nearly 80 per cent of the respondents to this survey were 30 years or older at the time of the interviews. Almost 42 per cent were over the age of 40.



Sixty-eight per cent of the respondents were women, a finding not unexpected, given the population. This number was consistent across the AVED- and ELSA-funded respondents. The 1998 ESL Student Outcomes Project found that 69 per cent of survey respondents were women. ESL service providers report that women are nearly always in the majority in their classes. While there may be several reasons for this imbalance, the one most often cited is that in many immigrant families, men are more likely to be working full-time at one or more jobs and simply do not have the time to take courses to upgrade their English skills.

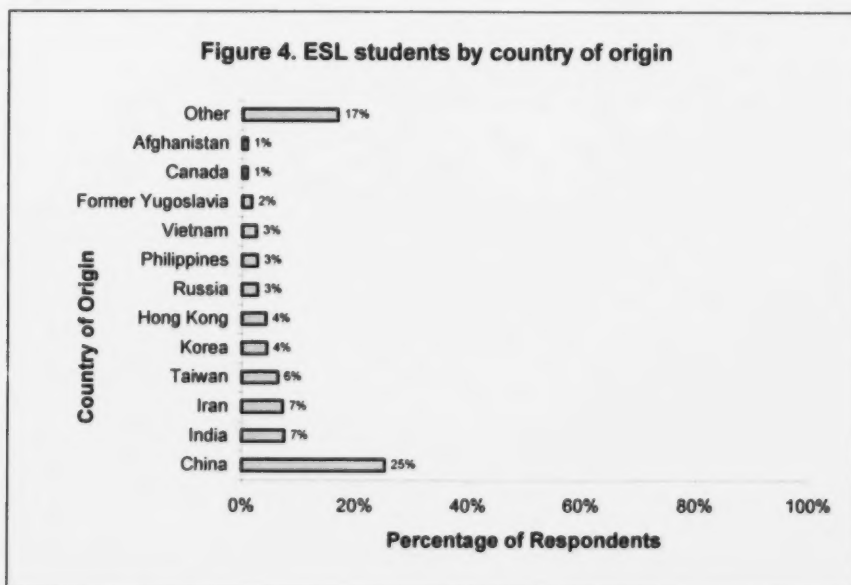


Country of Origin:

Almost all the students (99 per cent) were born outside Canada (Figure 4). The interview cohort may also have included francophone Canadians seeking to improve their English language skills.

Forty-three per cent of the respondents came from China, Taiwan or Hong Kong. This number is consistent with the demographic findings (40 per cent) reported in the 1998 ESL student outcomes report. More current figures reported by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) also rank the People's Republic of China as the top source country for immigrants, with India ranked second and the Philippines, third.⁶

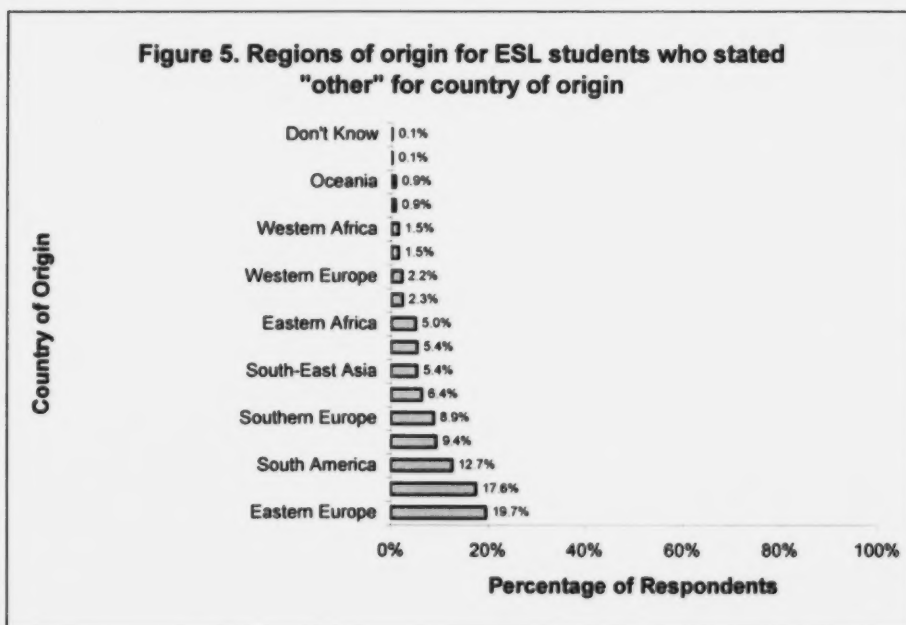
Although the surveys are not directly comparable, it is interesting to note that participation in ESL classes among individuals from the former Yugoslavia dropped from six per cent reported in 1998 to two per cent in the current survey. CIC also reports significant reductions in the number of immigrants and refugees from this region since the easing of tensions following the civil war. In 2000, Yugoslavia was ranked as the number 9 source country for immigration to Canada, with 4,723 applicants; by 2002 it had dropped to 31st place, with 1,620 immigrants.⁷



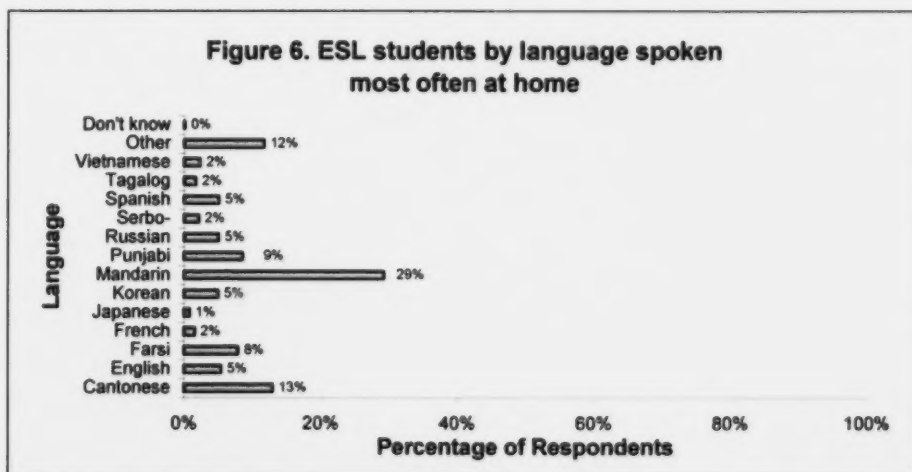
⁶ Citizenship and Immigration Canada. *The Monitor*. Fall 2003.

⁷ Citizenship and Immigration Canada. *Facts and Figures 2002: Immigration Overview*. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/index.html>

The 800 respondents in the "other" category come from all over the world. Their distribution by region is charted in Figure 5.



Naturally, the language spoken most often at home is closely related to the country of origin; 42 per cent of respondents speak Mandarin or Cantonese in their home environment. Indo-Iranian languages are the next most common, followed by Spanish, English, Korean and Russian (Figure 6).

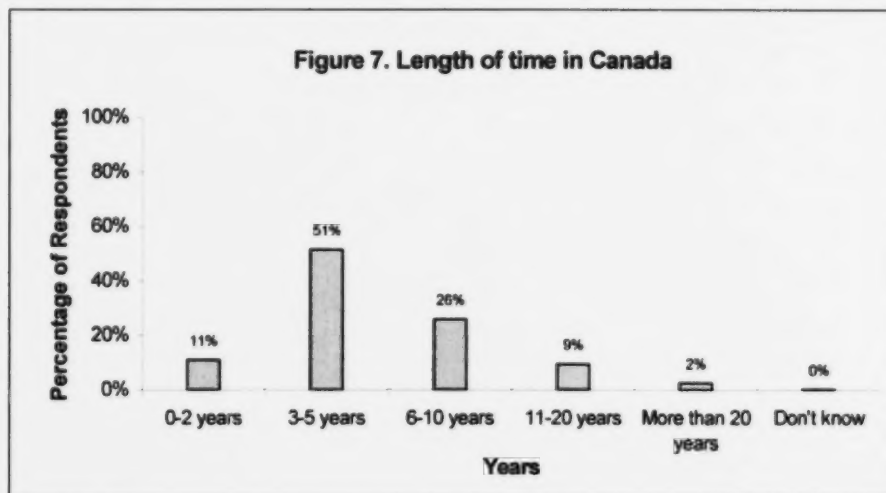


Of the 215 respondents who reported speaking English at home:

- 35 had been in Canada between 11 and 20 years,
- 80, between 6 and 10 years,
- 74, between 3 and 5 years.

Time in Canada:

Slightly more than half of the former ESL students reported living in Canada between three and five years **at the time of the survey** (Figure 7). One-quarter of the respondents had been in Canada between six and 10 years. Nearly equal numbers had been here two years or less and more than 11 years (431 and 469 respectively). It is important to note that the respondents may have completed their ESL courses anywhere between one and two years before the time of the survey.

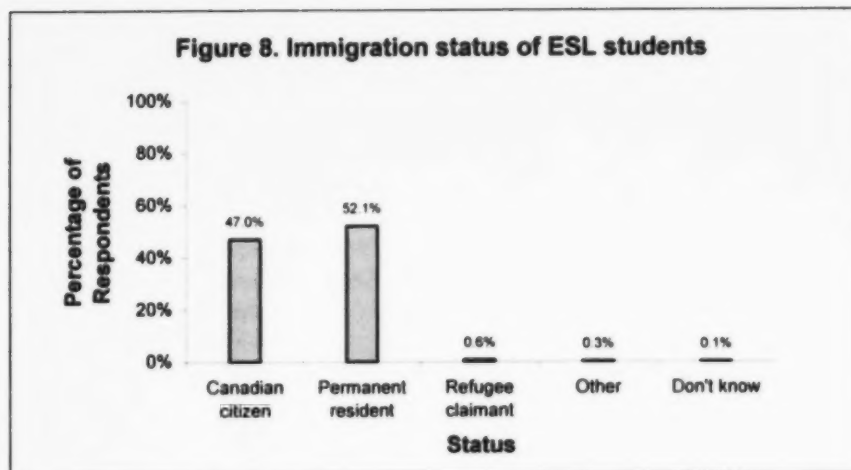


Immigration Status:

The immigration status of the former students was included in the cohort data supplied by institutions and was also a question in the survey.

Number of Canadian citizens at time of enrollment in ESL: 877
Number of Canadian citizens at time of interview: 1,864

It is tempting to say that 987 of the respondents became Canadian citizens between the time they took their ESL course and the time of the interview, but it is impossible to draw such a conclusion with any confidence. The survey result is self-reported, and it is not clear how the different institutions gathered the information on immigration status when students registered for courses.



Level of Education:

The immigrants surveyed for this study reported very high levels of education before coming to Canada (Figure 9). Forty-five per cent said they had completed a university degree, 14 per cent of those at the post-graduate level. In the 1998 survey, only 28 per cent of the respondents reported having a university degree before coming to Canada. The 2003 data would seem to correspond more closely to the information reported by Statistics Canada from the 2001 Census, wherein 40 per cent of the enumerated immigrants who arrived during the 1990s reported having a university degree. This compares with 23 per cent for the general population.⁸

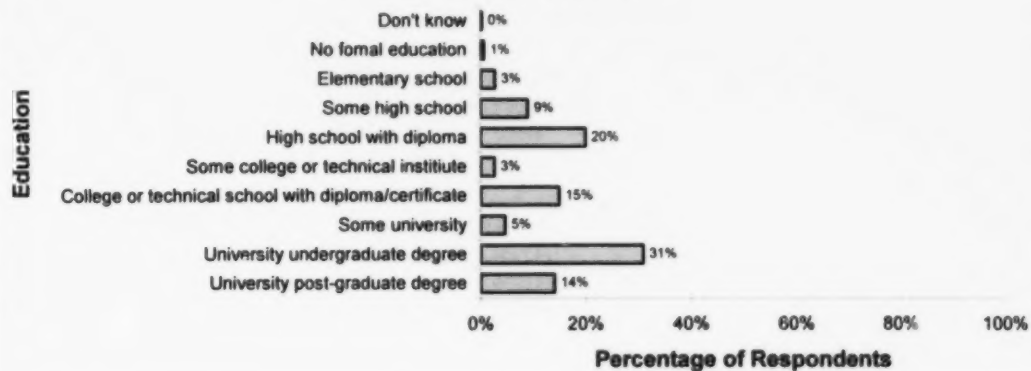
Sixty-seven per cent of the respondents to this current survey had taken at least some post-secondary courses; nearly 20 per cent reported having high school diplomas as their highest level of education.

These numbers would seem to confirm anecdotal reports of teachers and administrators who say the students in their classes are increasingly highly educated, with strong professional and skilled work experience in their home countries. This group has been identified as an important, often untapped, solution to labour market shortages.⁹

⁸ BC Stats. Immigration Highlights, issue 02-4.

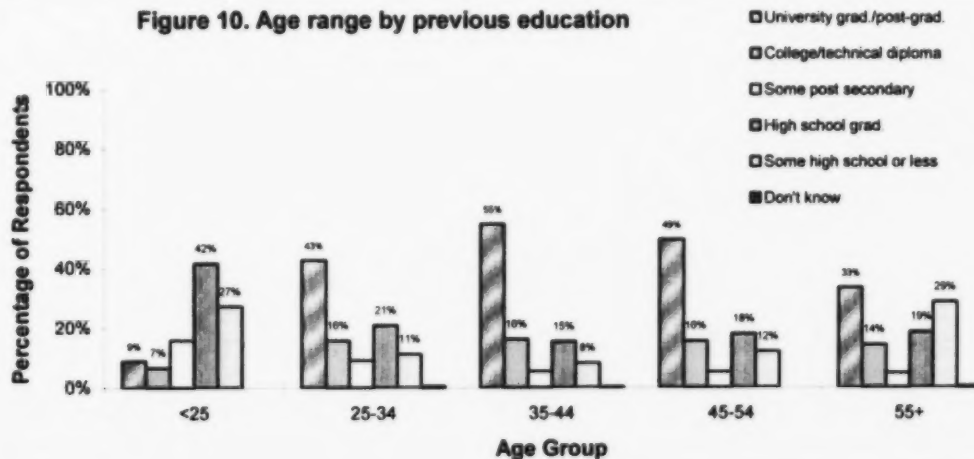
⁹ Alboim, Naomi. *Fulfilling the Promise: Integrating Immigrant Skills into the Canadian Economy*. Ottawa: Caledon Institute of Social Policy. 2002.

Figure 9. Highest level of formal education before coming to Canada

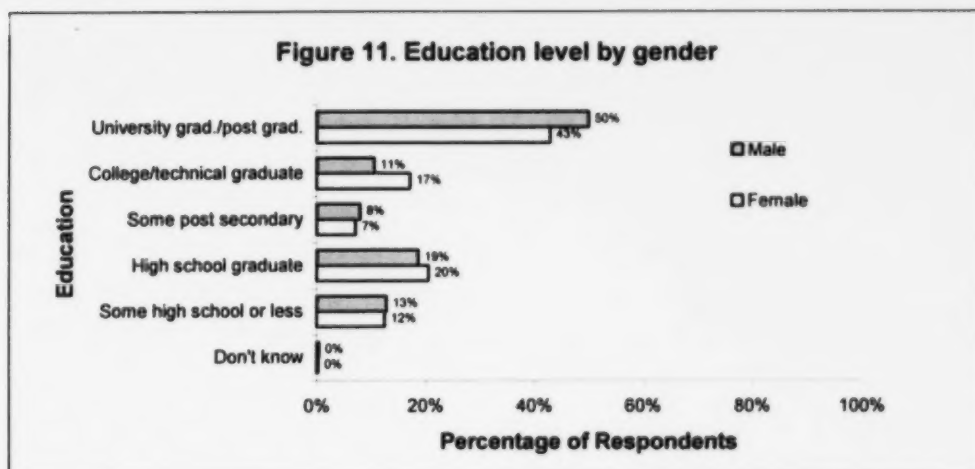


When levels of previous education are broken down by the age of respondents, we find that the middle two age groupings, between 35 and 54 years, are more likely to report having a university degree than those in the younger or older groups (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Age range by previous education



When broken down by gender, a slightly higher number of males report being university graduates; however, more females claimed to be college, technical and high school graduates (Figure 11).



English Skills Prior to ESL Courses:

When responses for all four language skill areas (reading, writing, listening and speaking) are averaged, about 44 per cent of the former students identified their skill level as "intermediate." About 12 per cent rated themselves as "advanced." Nearly nine per cent said they started classes with no English skills. Given that ELSA-funded students must be assessed at skill levels between CLB 1 and CLB 4 to qualify for their programs, it is not surprising to find that they were nearly twice as likely as the AVED-funded respondents to report "no English skills." Figure 12 below shows the reported English level by each skill area.

Figure 12. Self-reported English skill level before starting ESL classes



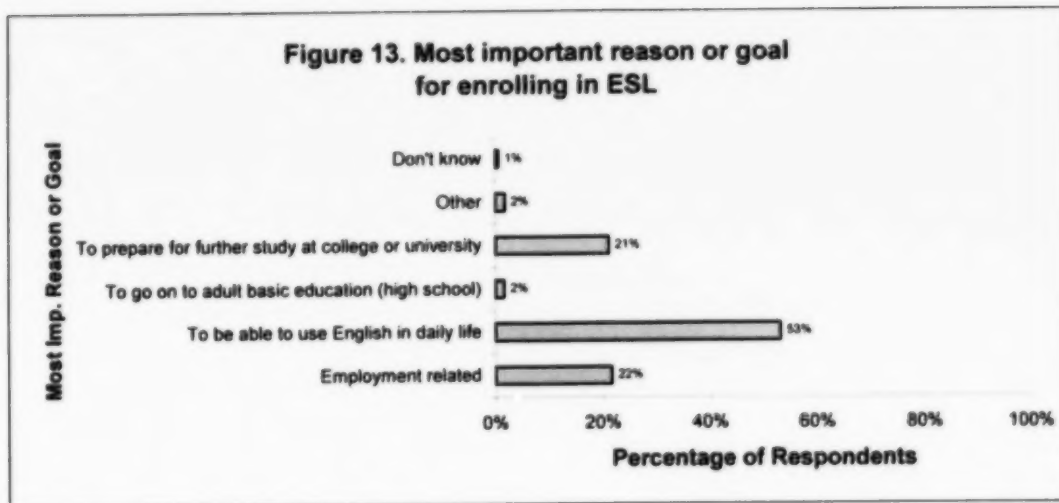
Goals or Reasons for Studying ESL

The respondents were asked to rate three goals or reasons for enrolling in ESL classes (Figure 13):

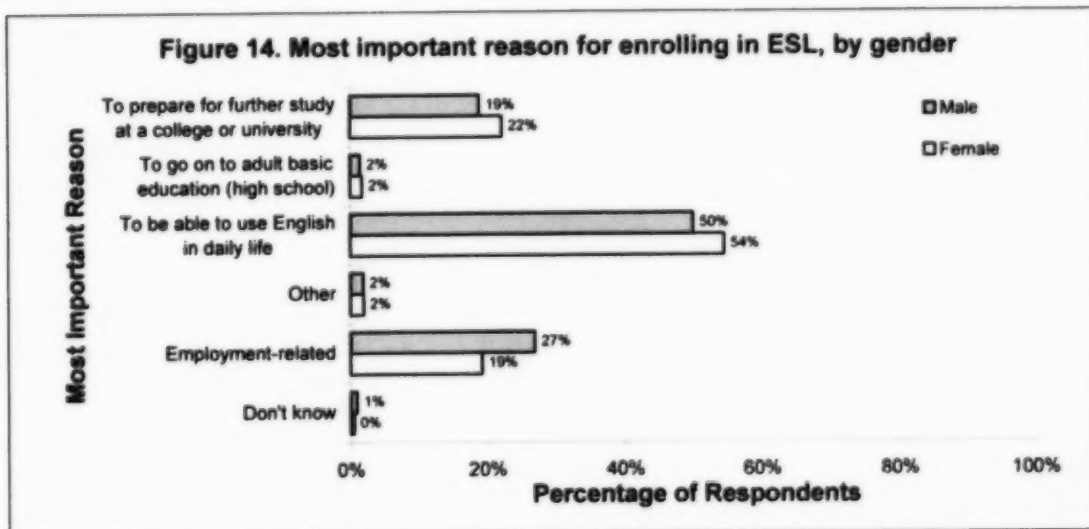
How important was it to:

1. improve your employment situation?
 - very important—69 per cent
 - somewhat important—16 per cent
2. improve your ability to use English in daily life?
 - very important—76 per cent
 - somewhat important—17 per cent
3. prepare for further study at a college or university?
 - very important—61 per cent
 - somewhat important—18 per cent

When asked to identify the most important goal in studying ESL, however, more than half (53 per cent) of the students said "to be able to use English in daily life." Employment-related goals and further study at college or university nearly tied for second. These figures are an interesting reversal of the responses reported in the 1998 survey report, when 48 per cent of the students identified employment-related reasons for taking ESL courses.



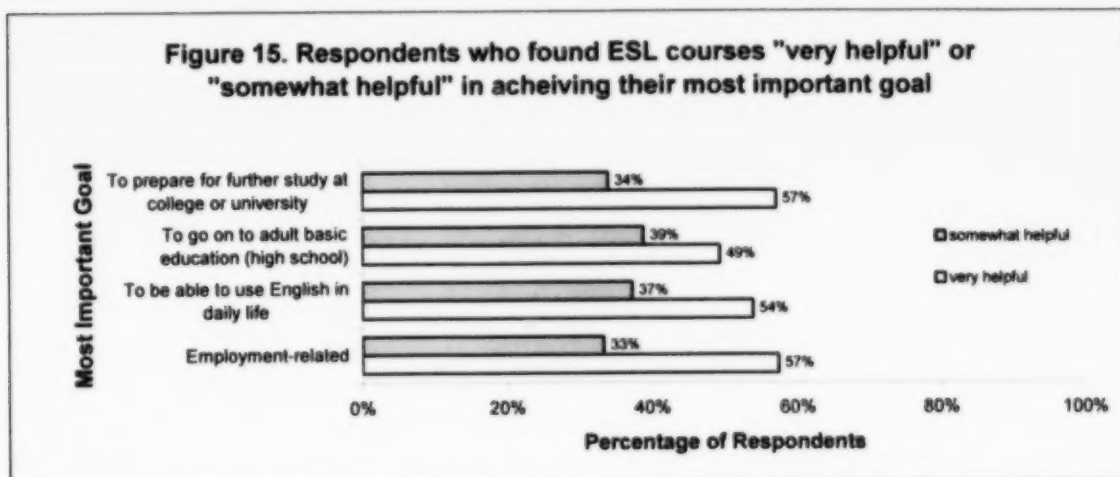
There were some minor differences between the responses of men and women, as illustrated in Figure 14.



Student Satisfaction

More than 90 per cent of the respondents said their ESL courses were "very helpful" or "somewhat helpful" in achieving their most important goal. The survey question offered four main choices for "the most important reason or goal for enrolling." Figure 15 represents the results for "very helpful" and "somewhat

helpful" broken down by the most important goal. In total, seven per cent said their ESL courses were "not very helpful" in achieving their most important goal, and two per cent responded "not at all helpful."

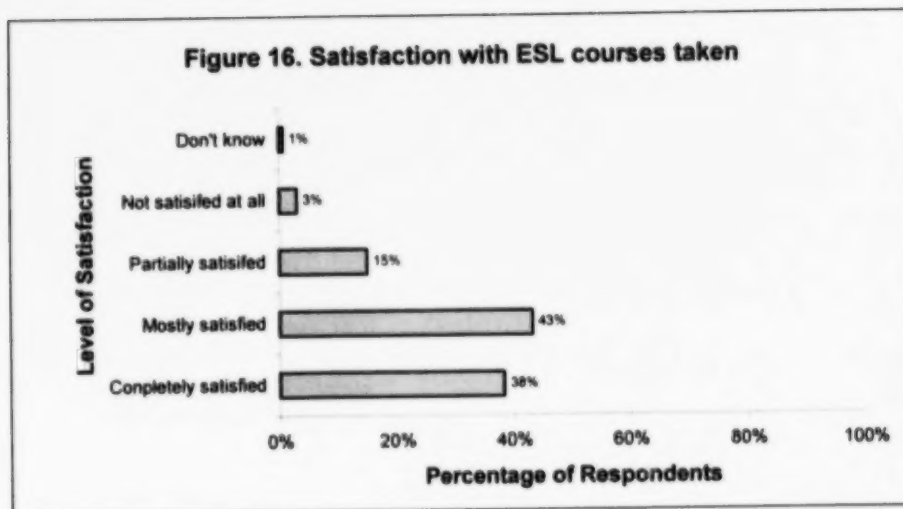


When asked about how helpful the ESL courses were in improving the four specific language skills, responses were fairly consistent (Table 1). For writing, reading and listening skills, about 85 per cent of the former students labelled their ESL studies as "very helpful" or "somewhat helpful." This dropped to 80 per cent when respondents were asked about speaking skills.

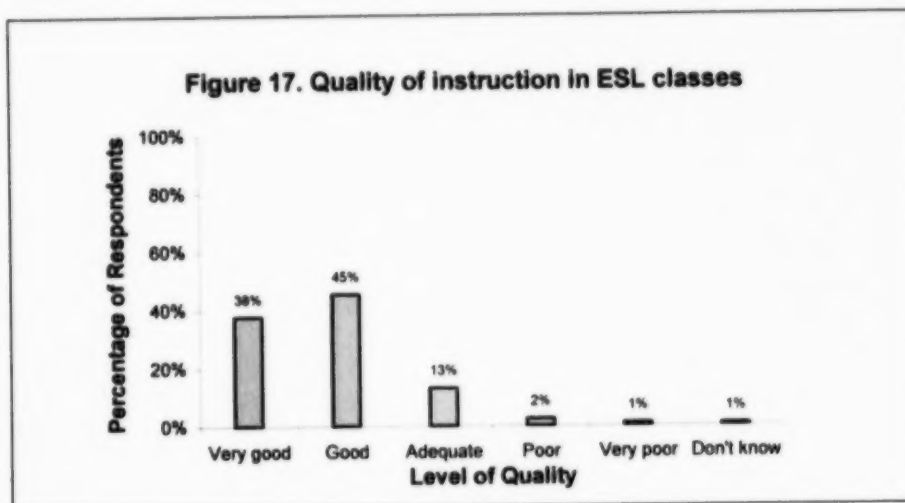
Table 1. Helpfulness of ESL in Improving Language Skills

Skill	"Very helpful"	"Somewhat helpful"	"Not Very helpful"	"Not at all helpful"
Writing	52 %	33 %	13%	2%
Reading	49%	37%	12%	2%
Listening	52%	32%	11%	2%
Speaking	46%	35%	15%	3%

Overall satisfaction with ESL courses was high, with nearly 82 per cent reporting they were "completely satisfied" or "mainly satisfied" (Figure 16). Only three per cent, or 120 respondents, said they were "not satisfied at all."



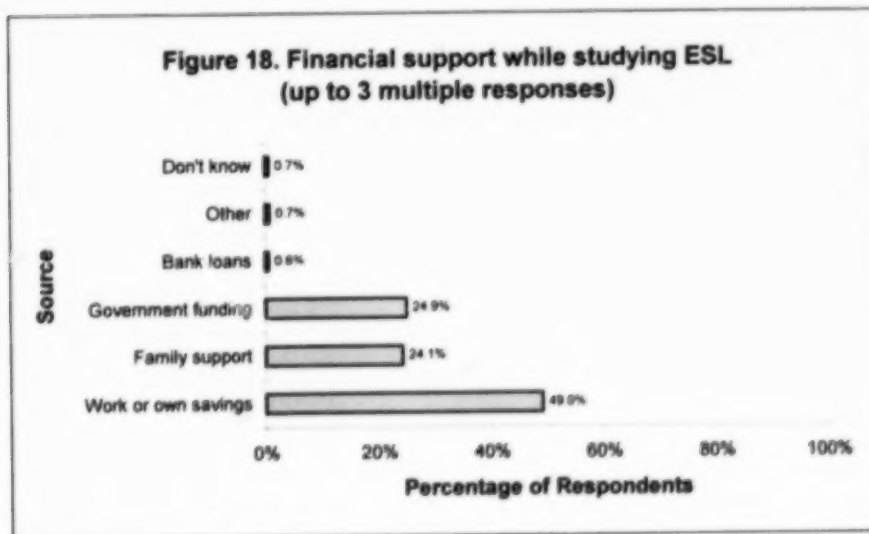
Responses related to quality of instruction were similar (Figure 17). Eighty-three per cent rated the quality of instruction as "good" or "very good." Slightly more than three per cent rated it as "poor" or "very poor."



Financial Support

Interviewers were instructed to allow up to three responses to the question: "How did you support yourself financially while studying ESL?" Twenty-four per cent of respondents identified "family" as one of the means of financial support during their studies. Nearly 25 per cent reported they had used the Adult Basic Education Student Assistance Program or another type of government funding to

complete ESL courses. Almost half of the respondents said they relied on a job or their own savings for all or part of their financial support while studying.



Further Studies

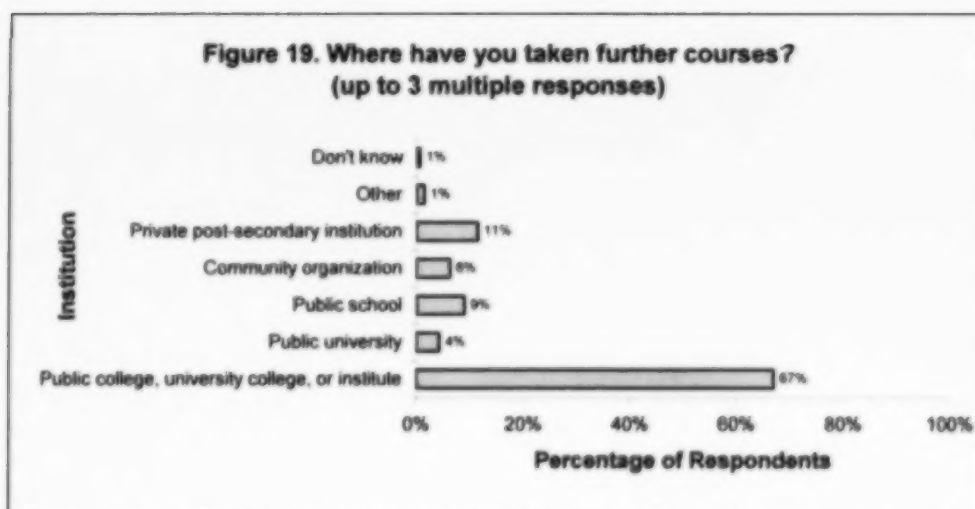
Nearly 45 per cent, or 1,793, of the survey respondents reported taking more courses after they completed their ESL studies.

Figure 19 shows that of this number:

- 71 per cent attended a public university, college, university college or institute;
- 11 per cent took courses at a private post-secondary institution;
- nine per cent attended a public school (for example, through a school district).

Respondents may have attended more than one type of institution, as they were allowed up to three responses to the question.

**Figure 19. Where have you taken further courses?
(up to 3 multiple responses)**



Of the 1,793 individuals who reported taking further courses, 43 per cent (770) were enrolled in a program or course at the time of the survey. About half that number (381 individuals) were enrolled full-time.

Employment Outcomes

Of the more than 4,000 respondents, nearly 75 per cent, or 3,000, reported they were in the labour force—that is **employed, or unemployed but looking for work** (Figure 20). Of that 3,000, about 78 per cent were employed, either as a paid worker or self-employed. Twenty-two per cent were unemployed. At the time of writing, the B.C. and national unemployment rates ranged between seven and eight per cent.¹⁰ The 2002 B.C. College and Institute Student Outcomes project reported that nine per cent of former students in the labour force were unemployed.¹¹

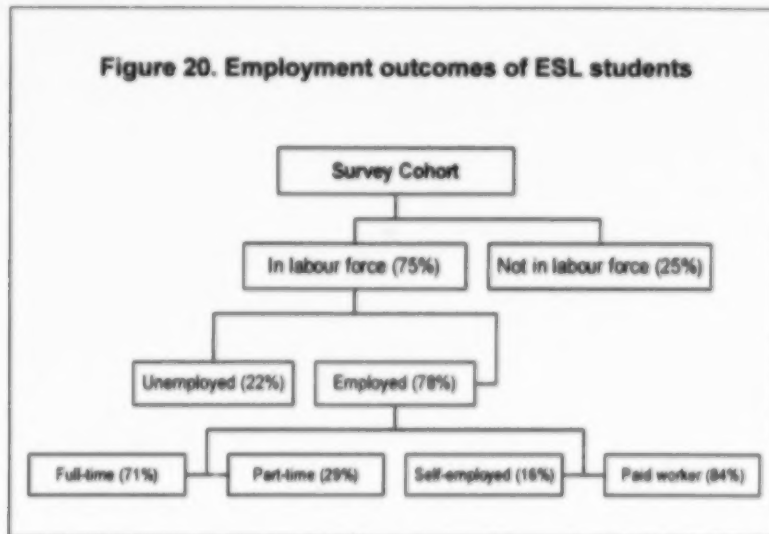
Among the respondents who classed themselves as employed, more than 70 per cent worked at least 30 hours per week or full-time, and nearly 30 per cent reported working less than 30 hours (part-time). When broken down by gender, 82 per cent of employed males reported working full-time, compared with 64 per cent of females. For the general population, Statistics Canada also reports that a greater percentage of males than females work full-time, with 89 per cent of employed males reporting full-time work, and 72 per cent of females.¹²

¹⁰ http://www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/ae-ei/employment_insurance.shtml

¹¹ <http://outcomes.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/Publications/highlights.asp>

¹² Statistics Canada. Labour Force Survey 2003. www.statcan.ca

Sixty-eight per cent of the respondents who reported that their most important goal for enrolling in ESL courses was employment, either as an employee at the time of the survey.



Skill Level

Those who reported being employed were asked to identify the title of their main job, as well as the main duties involved with that position. Respondents were told that their main job was the one in which they work the most hours. Using the National Occupational Classification (NOC) matrices, the following breakdowns in skill level (Figure 21) and skill type (Figure 22) were found:¹³

¹³ At the time of writing available at <http://www23.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/2001/e/generic/welcome.shtml>

Figure 21. NOC skill level of ESL students

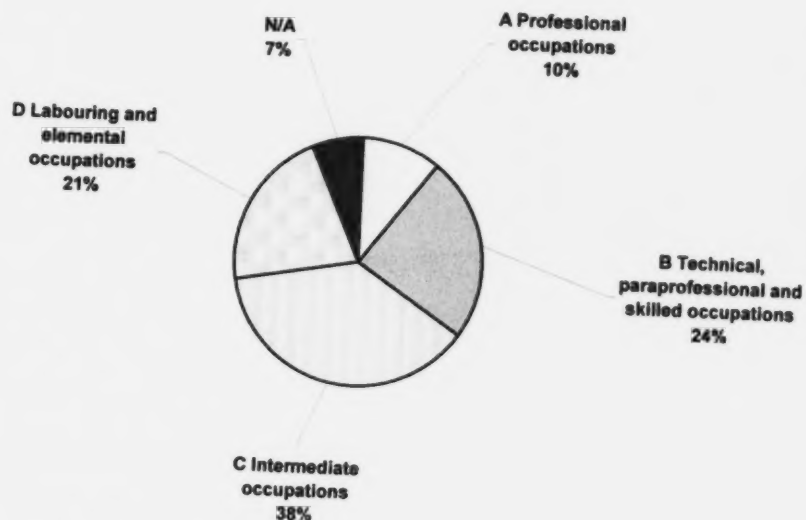


Figure 22. Percentage of ESL students by NOC skill type



Table 2 offers some detail on the four skill levels defined by Human Resources Skills Development Canada in the NOC.

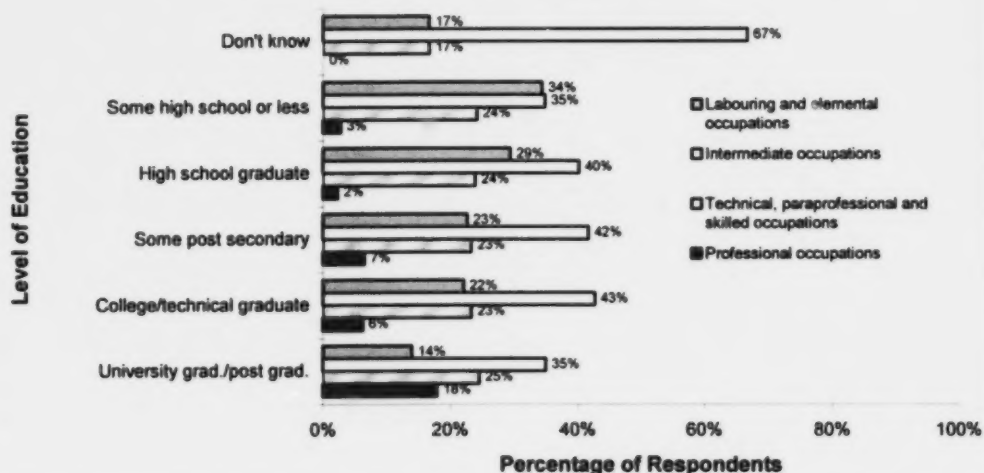
Table 2. NOC Skill Levels

Skill level	Education or training "usually" required
A Professional occupations (accountant, engineer, physician)	University
B Technical, paraprofessional and skilled occupations (clerical supervisor, draftsman, paralegal, technical occupations in health care)	College or apprenticeship training
C Intermediate occupations (finance clerk, child care or home support worker, transit driver, forestry worker, machine operator)	Secondary school and/or occupation specific training
D Labouring and elemental occupations (cashier, cleaner, labourer)	On-the-job training

More than 20 per cent of the respondents placed themselves in Skill Level D jobs (labouring and elemental occupations) and 38 per cent in Level C (intermediate occupations).

In the following chart, it is evident that participation in professional occupations is highest among those with a university degree and post-graduate degree, but a significant proportion of the individuals surveyed were engaged in intermediate occupations and elemental occupations, even with previous post-secondary education.

Figure 23. Level of previous education by current NOC skill level



Care needs to be taken when drawing conclusions from these data. There may be several factors that influence the employment situations of these respondents. As well, the survey did not include a question about employment history in the home country, thus eliminating the possibility for further comparisons. However, it must be noted that ESL service providers have long reported that many immigrants—46 per cent in this case—end up in sales and service occupations, no matter what their level of formal education. Statistics Canada also reports that recent immigrants who were employed were most often working in sales and service and in processing and manufacturing occupations.¹⁴ The most recent statistics for employment by occupation available for the general population in B.C. show that 29 per cent of those surveyed were working in sales and service occupations.¹⁵

In the fall of 2002, the Business Council of British Columbia reported in its *Industrial Relations Bulletin* (Vol. 34, No. 9) that the "overall employment rate of university-educated immigrants is about 19 percentage points lower than that for Canadian-born individuals with a university education."¹⁶

¹⁴ Statistic Canada. "Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada." *The Daily*. September 4, 2003.

¹⁵ BC Stats. *Labour Force Statistics February 2002*. www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca

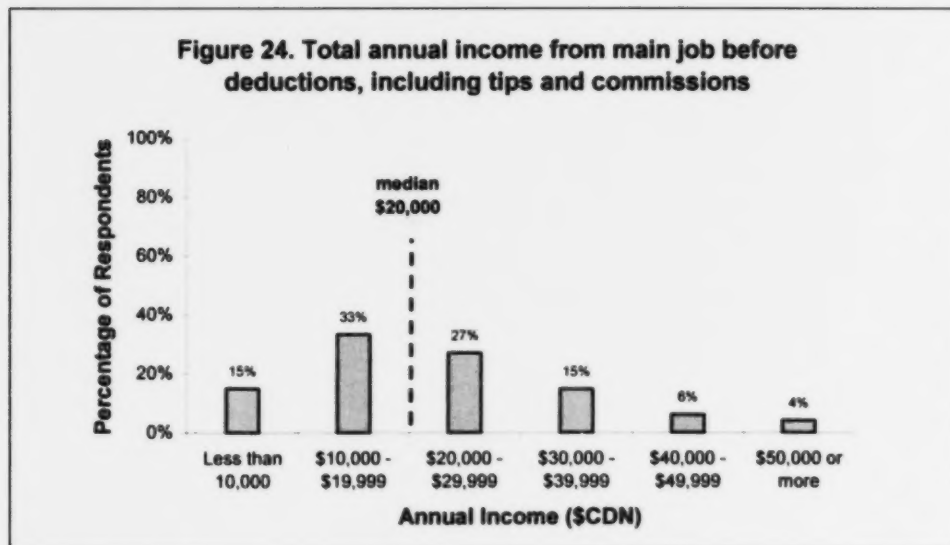
¹⁶ Summary of Proceedings from the Canada-B.C. Agreement for Co-operation on Immigration, Stakeholder Forum, July 2002.

It is also widely accepted that immigrants are "over-represented in low skill, low wage jobs" and "are not rewarded for their education as others are."¹⁷

These concerns have led to the formation of multi-sector task forces and initiatives across Canada, dedicated to improving labour market integration for immigrants.¹⁸

Annual Income from Main Job

The median income of employed respondents was \$20,000 (Figure 24). From their main job, nearly half (about 48 per cent) of respondents earned less than \$20,000 a year before deductions (including tips and commissions), and just over half earned more than \$20,000. Statistics Canada reports that the median income for British Columbians in the year 2000 was \$22,095.¹⁹ However, this number includes everyone 15 years and older.



As Figure 25 illustrates, nearly 70 per cent of those earning between \$10,000 and \$19,999 were working full time.

¹⁷ "Building Understanding, Commitment and Action: Research on Immigrants and Refugees in B.C." Powerpoint presentation by Martin Spigelman Research Associates, February 2002. Roundtable on Immigrant Labour Market Research, February 15, 2002. Looking Ahead initiative, Vancouver.

¹⁸ In B.C., at the time of writing, information on two of these groups may be found at <http://www.lookingahead.bc.ca/> and http://www.m.gov.bc.ca/amip/IQP/EASI_main.htm

¹⁹ BC Stats. www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca

Figure 25. Annual income by full-time and part-time work

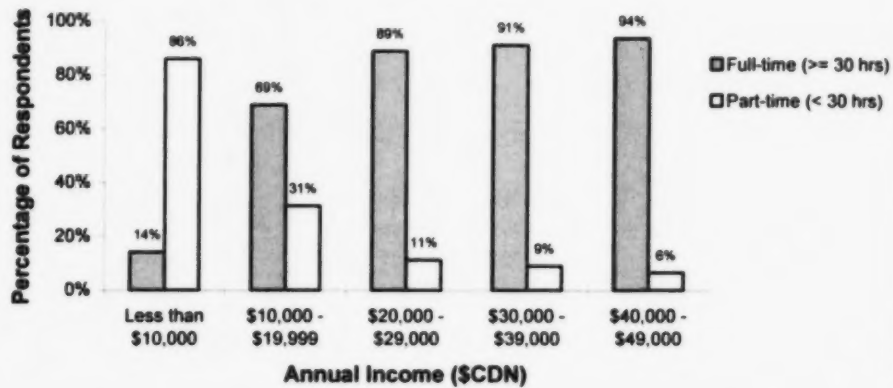
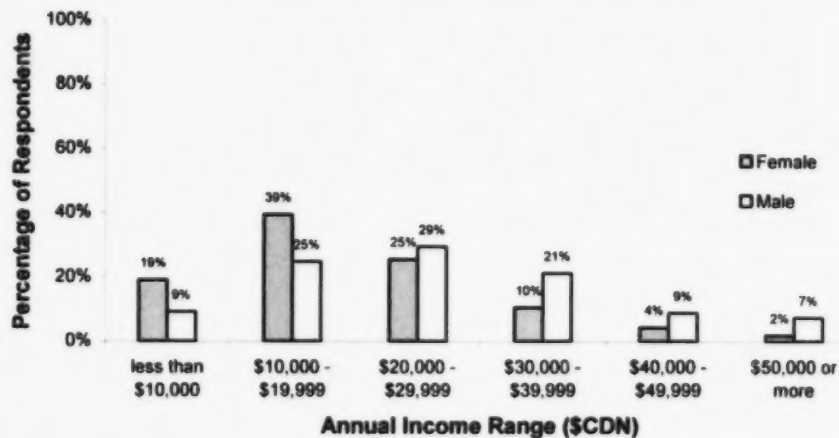
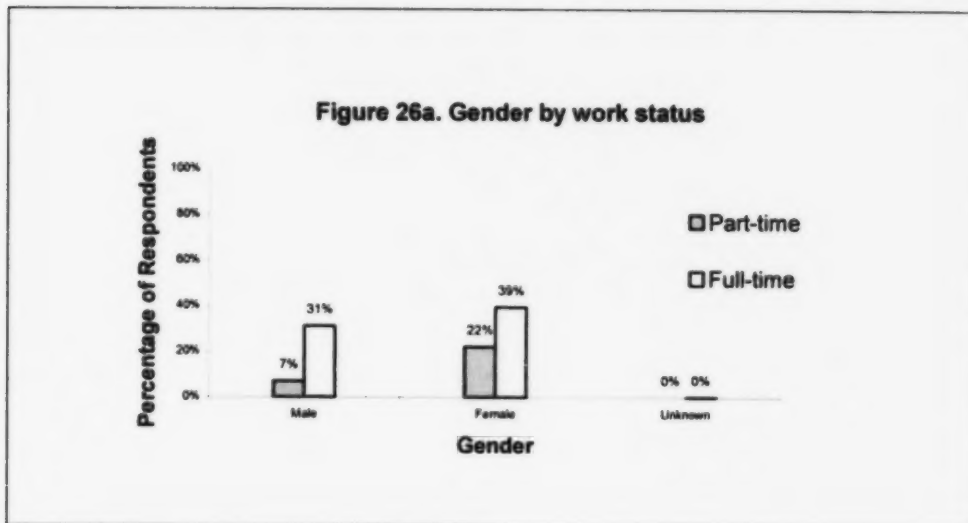


Figure 26 illustrates annual income by gender. Women appear to be over-represented in the \$0-\$19,999 ranges and under-represented in the higher income groupings. At the same time, women made up 39 per cent of the full-time workers in the employed group, while men working full-time represented 31 per cent of the employed group (Figure 26a).

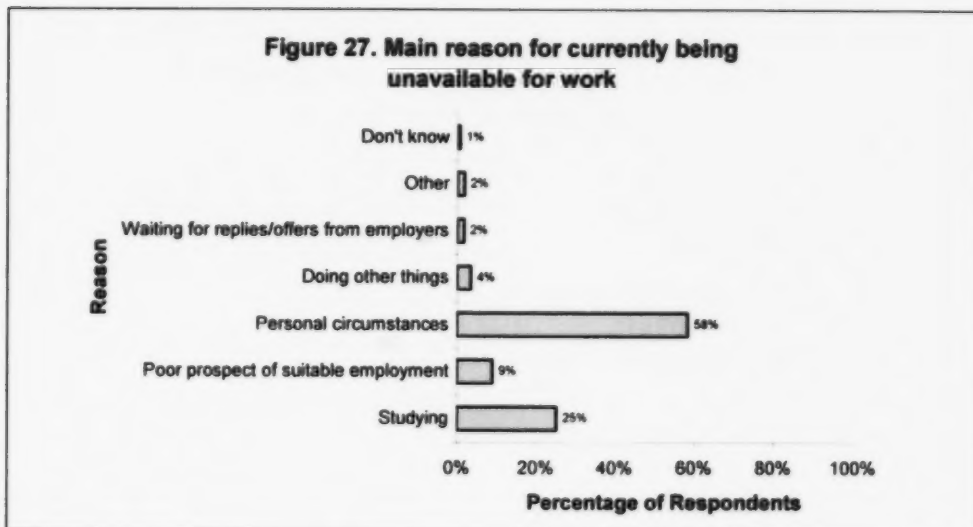
Figure 26. Annual income range by gender





Respondents Not Looking for Work:

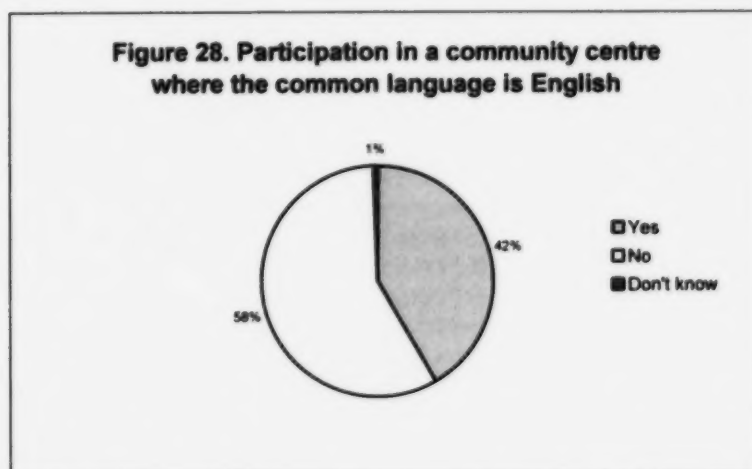
About 900, or 54 per cent, of the respondents who were not working answered "no" to the question "Could you have worked within the last month if a job had been offered?" Of this group, just over half offered "personal circumstances," such as family commitments or health problems, as the main reason. A quarter of that number were studying. Other notable responses were "poor prospects for suitable employment," "doing other things" (sports, volunteer work) and "waiting for replies from employers."



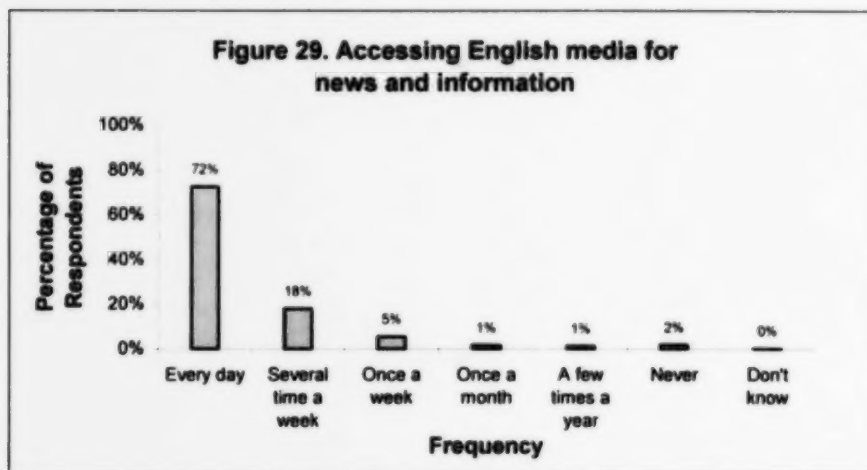
Social Adaptation

As noted above, "being able to use English in daily life" was identified as the most important reason or goal for studying ESL by a majority of the respondents to this survey. Ideally, the survey would have included more questions about social participation and the use of English in daily activities. However, due to the budget limitations already mentioned, only three questions were asked in this area:

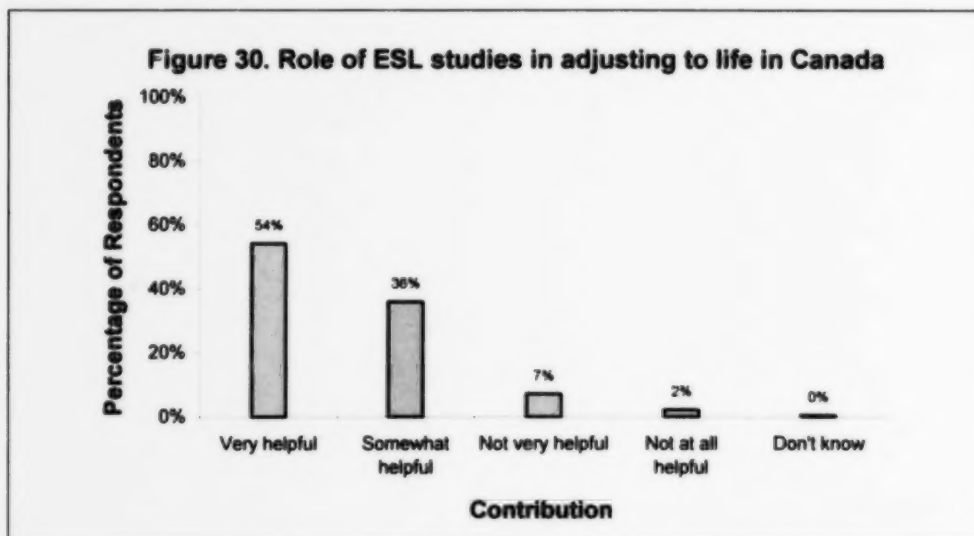
- Do you participate in activities in a community centre where the common language is English? As Figure 28 shows, 42 per cent of respondents said "yes."



- How often do you access English media for news and information? (Figure 29). Seventy-two per cent of respondents reported they use English media for news and information every day; 18 per cent said several times a week.



- On a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is *very helpful* and 4 is *not at all helpful*, how helpful were your ESL studies at [institution] in helping you adjust to life in Canada? As Figure 30 shows, the vast majority of respondents felt their ESL studies helped them adjust to life in Canada.



Conclusion

The 2003 ESL Student Outcomes Survey creates a profile of a group of highly educated adults who attended ESL classes at a public college or university college in B.C. over the two years beginning in July 2000. These students appear to have been well served by their experiences in the public post-secondary system. The majority were satisfied with the quality of instruction and say their courses helped them to improve their English skills, adapt to Canadian society and reach their goals.

However, the unemployment rate for the nearly 3,000 respondents who were classed as "in the labour force" at the time of the interviews was nearly triple the provincial and national rates. The study may also provide further evidence of what some stakeholders call the most pressing issue facing immigrants today—finding jobs that recognize education, training and skill levels gained outside Canada.

The 2003 ESL Student Outcomes Survey achieved a very good response rate and gathered some valuable information on adults taking ESL programs. Members of the working group and the ministries involved make the following suggestions for the co-ordinators of future surveys in this area:

- Ensure that planning begins well in advance of the optimal survey time. Projects of this type require a good deal of discussion and preparation, especially if there is no established survey instrument. Preliminary discussions on the current study began in December of 2002, and it was a challenge to finalize the questionnaire before the late spring of 2003.
- Ensure there are enough funds to cover an extensive questionnaire, thorough data analysis and a comprehensive report.
- Remember that surveys of people whose first language is not English are more costly because they take longer to administer and often require the services of first-language speakers.
- A strong working group, which includes people from both the teaching/administration and institutional research sides, is important to achieve a result that benefits government, institutions and students.

Appendix A

Survey Participation Rate by Institution

Institution	N	Percentage of Respondents
Camosun College	269	6.7
Capilano University College	138	3.4
College of New Caledonia	33	0.8
College of the Rockies	13	0.3
Douglas College	331	8.2
Kwantlen University College	277	6.9
Malaspina University-College	32	0.8
North Island College	18	0.4
Northern Lights College	1	0.0
Northwest Community College	16	0.4
Okanagan University College	37	0.9
Open Learning Agency	1	0.0
Selkirk College	33	0.8
University College of the Cariboo	49	1.2
University College of the Fraser Valley	189	4.7
Vancouver Community College	2585	64.3
Total	4022	100.0

Appendix B

ESL Outcomes Survey – Final Version: June 5, 2003

SURVEY INTRODUCTION

Hello, my name is _____. I work for a company called _____. I'm calling on behalf of [institution]. We need your help for a survey of former ESL students at B.C. colleges, university colleges and institutes to improve services for future students. The purpose of this survey is to assess the quality of your educational experience and see if your ESL training has been useful to you. While the survey is voluntary, your participation is important. Your name will be kept confidential and the information you provide will be combined with the responses of other former students.

Permission to Proceed:

The survey takes about 10 minutes to complete. Do you have time to go through the survey with me now?

1. Yes [GO TO Q1]
2. No [Attempt to set up future appointment]

Introductory Questions to Determine Eligibility:

Q1 To confirm, did you take **ESL** courses from [institution] at some time between July 1, 2000 and June 30, 2002?

1. Yes [GO TO Q2]
2. No [Probe, else thank and terminate]

Q2 Have you been enrolled in any **ESL training** at a B.C. college or institute since July 2002?

1. Yes (have been enrolled in ESL) [Thank and terminate]
2. No (have not been enrolled since July 2002) [Go to next section]
88. Don't know [Attempt to probe. If still no answer, terminate.]
99. Refused [Attempt to probe. If still no answer, terminate.]

This survey is meant for those who have not been enrolled in ESL training since July 2002.

Thank respondent and terminate the survey.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHICS

A1 What is your country of origin? [DO NOT READ OPTIONS]

- 0. Canada
- 1. Taiwan
- 2. Hong Kong
- 3. China
- 4. Korea
- 5. Iran
- 6. Afghanistan
- 7. India
- 8. Pakistan
- 9. Former Yugoslavia
- 10. Vietnam
- 11. Other → Please specify: _____
- 88. Don't know
- 99. Refused

A2 What language is spoken most often at your home? [DO NOT READ OPTIONS]

- 1. Cantonese
- 2. English
- 3. Farsi
- 4. French
- 5. Japanese
- 6. Korean
- 7. Mandarin
- 8. Punjabi
- 9. Serbo-Croatian
- 10. Spanish
- 11. Tagalog
- 12. Vietnamese
- 13. Other → Please specify: _____
- 88. Don't know
- 99. Refused

A3 How long have you been in Canada? [DO NOT READ OPTIONS] [SKIP to Section B if A1=0]

1. 0-2 years
2. 3-5 years
3. 6-10 years
4. 11-20 years
5. More than 20 years

88. Don't know
99. Refused

A4 What is your immigration status? [READ OPTIONS] [SKIP to Section B if A1=0]

1. Canadian citizen
2. Permanent resident (landed immigrant)
3. Refugee claimant
4. Other → Please specify: _____

88. Don't know
99. Refused

SECTION B:
PREVIOUS LABOUR MARKET EXPERIENCE AND EDUCATION

B1 What was your highest level of formal education before coming to *Canada* [Insert "B.C." if A1=0; Insert "Canada" if A1≠0]? [DO NOT READ OPTIONS]

1. University post-graduate degree
2. University undergraduate degree
3. Some university
4. College or technical institute with diploma/certificate
5. Some college or technical institute
6. High school with diploma
7. Some high school
8. Elementary school
9. No formal education

88. Don't know
99. Refused

SECTION C:
EVALUATION OF ESL TRAINING

C1A Before you started your ESL classes at *[institution]*, what was your skill level in English reading? [READ OPTIONS]

- 1. None
- 2. Beginner
- 3. Intermediate
- 4. Advanced

- 8. Don't know
- 9. Refused

C1B Before you started your ESL classes at *[institution]*, what was your skill level in English writing? [READ OPTIONS]

- 1. None
- 2. Beginner
- 3. Intermediate
- 4. Advanced

- 8. Don't know
- 9. Refused

C1C Before you started your ESL classes at *[institution]*, what was your skill level in English listening? [READ OPTIONS]

- 1. None
- 2. Beginner
- 3. Intermediate
- 4. Advanced

- 8. Don't know
- 9. Refused

C1D Before you started your ESL classes at [institution], what was your skill level in English speaking? [READ OPTIONS]

1. None
2. Beginner
3. Intermediate
4. Advanced

8. Don't know
9. Refused

Interviewer Read: Now I'm going to ask you some questions about your reasons for enrolling in ESL classes:

C2 On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is very important and 5 is not at all important, how important was it to improve your employment situation (get or improve job)?

1. Very important
2. Somewhat important
3. Neither important nor unimportant
4. Not very important
5. Not at all important

8. Don't know
9. Refused

C3 How important was it to improve your ability to use English in daily life?

1. Very important
2. Somewhat important
3. Neither important nor unimportant
4. Not very important
5. Not at all important

8. Don't know
9. Refused

C4 How important was it to prepare for further study at a college or university?

1. Very important
2. Somewhat important
3. Neither important nor unimportant
4. Not very important
5. Not at all important

8. Don't know
9. Refused

C5 When you enrolled in ESL classes at [institution], what was your most important reason or goal for enrolling? [DO NOT READ OPTIONS]

Interviewer note: If respondent asks for clarification then read *By primary or main goal we mean a clear aim or objective, a single reason more important than any other reasons you may have had for enrolling.*

1. Employment-related
2. To be able to use English in daily life
3. To go on to adult basic education (high school)
4. To prepare for further study at a college or university
5. Other → Please specify: _____

8. Don't know
9. Refused

C6 On a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is *very helpful* and 4 is *not at all helpful*, how helpful were your ESL courses in achieving your most important goal? Were they....

1. Very helpful
2. Somewhat helpful
3. Not very helpful
4. Not at all helpful

8. Don't know
9. Refused

On a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is *very helpful* and 4 is *not at all helpful*, how helpful were your ESL studies at [institution] in improving the following skills? Were they....

1. Very helpful
2. Somewhat helpful
3. Not very helpful
4. Not at all helpful

8. Don't know
9. Refused

- C7 ...English writing skills?
C8 ...English reading skills?
C9 ...English listening skills?
C10 ...English speaking skills?

C11 On a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is *completely satisfied* and 4 is *not satisfied at all*, how satisfied were you with the ESL courses you took at [institution]? Would you say you were...

1. Completely satisfied
2. Mainly satisfied
3. Partially satisfied
4. Not satisfied at all

8. Don't know
9. Refused

C12 On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is *very good* and 5 is *very poor*, how would you rate the quality of instruction in your ESL classes? Was it.....

1. Very good
2. Good
3. Adequate
4. Poor
5. Very poor

8. Don't know
9. Refused

C13 How did you support yourself financially while you were studying ESL?
[Surveyor note: If necessary to clarify further, you can say, "How did you pay for your living expenses while you were studying...?"] **[DO NOT READ OPTIONS; ALLOW 3 MULTIPLE RESPONSES]**

1. Work or own savings
2. Family support
3. Adult basic education student assistance program or other government funding
4. Bank loans
5. Other → Please specify: _____

88. Don't know
99. Refused

SECTION D
FURTHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

D1 Since finishing your ESL studies at *[institution]*, have you taken any other courses?

1. Yes
2. No [GO TO D5]
8. Don't know [GO TO D5]
9. Refused [GO TO D5]

D2 Where have you taken further courses? **[DO NOT READ OPTIONS; ALLOW 3 MULTIPLE RESPONSES]**

1. Public college, university college or institute
2. Public university
3. Public school (e.g., public high school)
4. Community organization
5. Private post-secondary institution
6. Other → Please specify: _____
8. Don't know
9. Refused

D3 Are you currently enrolled in a program or courses?

1. Yes
2. No [GO TO D5]
8. Don't know [GO TO D5]
9. Refused [GO TO D5]

D4 Are you currently enrolled full-time or part-time?

- 1. Full-time
- 2. Part-time
- 8. Don't know
- 9. Refused

Interviewer Read: Now on a different topic, I would like to ask you some questions regarding your employment.

D5 Are you currently working at a job or business?

- 1. Yes [GO TO D6]
- 2. No [GO TO D11]
- 8. Don't know [GO TO D11]
- 9. Refused [GO TO D11]

Interviewer Read: The next set of questions relates to your main job or business, that is, the job or business at which you normally work the most hours.

D6 Are you a paid worker employed by someone else or are you self-employed?

- 1. Paid worker
- 2. Self-employed
- 8. Don't know
- 9. Refused

D7 What is your job title? [Surveyor prompt: "For example, if you work in a restaurant your job title might be a waiter, or a cook."] [OPEN-ENDED]

- 8. Don't know
- 9. Refused

Interviewer note: Refers to main job only. Obtain fully detailed description: elementary school teacher, high school teacher, engineering research analyst, etc.

D8 What are your main duties? [OPEN-ENDED]

- 8. Don't know
- 9. Refused

D9 How many hours do you work, on average, each week at your main job? [OPEN-ENDED]

_____ hours

888. Don't know

999. Refused

D10 What is your total annual income from your main job before deductions, including tips and commissions? [OPEN-ENDED]

\$ _____ .00

[GO TO NEXT SECTION]

888888. Don't know [GO TO NEXT SECTION]

999999. Refused [GO TO NEXT SECTION]

If D5=2 (No)...

D11 Are you currently looking for work?

1. Yes [IF D4=1, GO TO D12, ELSE GO TO D13]

2. No [GO TO D13]

8. Don't know [GO TO D13]

9. Refused [GO TO D13]

Interviewer note: Ask only if D4=1 and D11=1:

D12 Are you a full-time student looking for full-time work?

1. Yes

2. No

8. Don't know

9. Refused

D13 Could you have worked within the last month if a job had been offered?

1. Yes [GO TO NEXT SECTION]

2. No [GO TO D14]

8. Don't know [GO TO NEXT SECTION]

9. Refused [GO TO NEXT SECTION]

D14

You said that you are not currently available for work. What is the main reason?
[DO NOT READ OPTIONS]

1. Studying
2. Poor prospect of suitable employment (e.g. low salaries, location, etc.)
3. Personal circumstances (e.g. health, family responsibilities, etc.)
4. Doing other things (e.g. travelling, sports, volunteering, etc.)
5. Waiting for replies from employers/expecting job offer
6. Other (Specify):
8. Don't know
9. Refused

SECTION E
SOCIAL ADAPTATION

E1

Do you participate in activities in a community centre, neighbourhood house or library where the common language is English?

1. Yes
2. No
8. Don't know
9. Refused

E2

How often do you access English media (radio, TV, newspapers) for news and information? **[READ OPTIONS]**

1. Every day
2. Several times a week
3. Once a week
4. Once a month
5. A few times a year
6. Never
8. Don't know
9. Refused

Interviewer note: Information may be interpreted quite broadly.

E3

On a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is *very helpful* and 4 is *not at all helpful*, how helpful were your ESL studies at *[institution]* in helping you adjust to life in *Canada* [Insert "B.C." if A1=0; Insert "Canada" if A1≠ 0]? Were they.....

1. Very helpful
2. Somewhat helpful
3. Not very helpful
4. Not at all helpful

8. Don't know
9. Refused

